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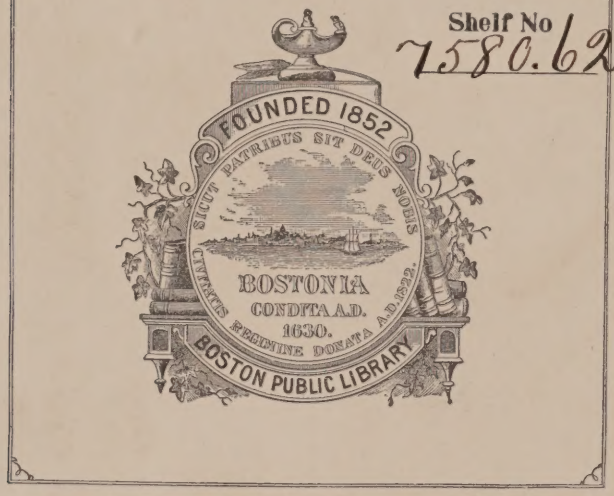

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Extracts from Letters received by the Educational Commission of Boston, from Teachers employed at Port Royal and its Vicinity.

[Printed by order of the General Committee.]

On Saturday, March 8th, our company, except two who were sent to Edisto and one to Dawfuski, started from Hilton Head in a small steamer for Beaufort. After breakfast, next morning, I went over to Ladies' Island. We were received with great cordiality by the negroes, who had seen one of our party before. They understand that their support and that of their families is to depend on their own exertions and faithfulness. No new clothing or other goods will be given them, except as reward or pay for labor done.

When we arrived, our first proceeding was to address the negroes, who collected in front of the piazza, as to what we should expect from them—namely, faithful work; and what they might expect from us—good care, justice, and to be taught to read. We told them we were to see that everything goes on straight, were to keep regular accounts of their labor, and that upon their faithfulness their future good depended. The negroes all seem to be gentle and civil, and pleased to have us come among them. There is a general desire to learn to read; some know a little already. They are quite as well clothed as I expected to find them, but still need clothing very much. Cheap calico or other cloth, not made up, would be very useful here, as they would make it up to suit themselves, and the practice in sewing will surely not hurt them. Every thing looks bright for the future, so far as our work is concerned, much brighter than I ever dared to hope. Fortunately the authority under which we act is much respected here, and thus far we have been treated with much civility, if not kindness, by soldiers and every body.

16th, Sunday morning, after breakfast, we drove down to the Baptist Church, at St. Helena Island. The house is situated in the midst of splendid old trees, with much hanging moss. Mr. E. expected to preach, but we found the pulpit was occupied by a soldier. The church was filled with negroes; the dress of many of them was very odd, made principally of carpet stuff. A little boy, who came on horseback with his grandfather, wore a jacket made of old Brussels carpet, and trowsers of Kidderminster. After the sermon, Mr. Pierce made some remarks to the people as to our purpose in coming, and their duties in view of it. They came up to shake hands with us after listening very attentively, and seemed very glad to have us come. At Capt. F.'s I met a man, about forty years old, called "Bob;" he said he could read the Bible, but had never been able to find that any thing in it authorized such treatment as they had received from their masters. He had always heard that Christ was the justest man that ever lived; but if He allowed people to be treated as they had been treated, then Christ was not true.

March 26th. Last Sunday we went to the Church on St. Helena Island; we had a school before Church, at which nearly a hundred negroes, of all ages, were present. There being no one to preach, I was asked to say something; so I began the service by reading a hymn, two lines at a time, while a colored brother led the singing. By this time there were three or four hundred negroes in the Church. I then read several passages from the Bible, and, in place of a sermon, told them one of the stories which used to be liked best by the children at our Bible class at Mr. C.'s. Mr. P. then made some very good remarks of a practical nature, and another hymn was doled out, two lines at a time.

Salt, to deal out to the negroes, is very much wanted. They have been accustomed to a pint of it every two weeks, each man, and need it more than clothing. In view of this pressing need for salt, I have agreed to be responsible for thirty dollars' worth; and you may tell any of my friends who wish to give any thing, that they may pay five dollars and consider one barrel of salt as their contribution to the wants of these poor people.

E. W. H.

Edisto, 10 P.M., March 20th, 1862.

My hands are full, as I like to have them—I having under me ten plantations at least, and nothing to ride but a twenty-one year old pony. I have now recorded the names of only about 400 blacks, but think I have 600 in all.

I never care about moving in a better circle than I find right around me here. As looking-glasses are scarce, I sometimes forget I am a white man.

On Tuesday I began my day school for children, under the care of "Hettie," who had stolen a knowledge of letters from time to time, and last night I began my evening school. It is a common desire among this people to know how to read. Yesterday, on one of my plantations, I left a primer with an old negro, say of 75 years, who wanted to teach a few around him; and to-day I was surprised to know an old woman present had come to learn her letters—probably to teach her grandchild at home living with her.

My text last Sunday was, "*Work* out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Reading such selections from Mr. Pierce's letter as I thought proper, I likened them to the children of Israel in the wilderness, free from the bondage of Pharaoh, but not yet in the promised land. I dwelt long upon working out their own salvation, showing them how every bale of cotton stamped with free labor was an unanswerable argument in their favor. They seem perfectly to understand their position, though the Cuba story has been diligently preached to them.

I have a gang of ten, I believe, who travelled about 200 miles, after having been carried thus far by their masters, and who would not obey orders to follow still further.

I believe my company are not that lazy set they are generally reported to be. I see carpenters and house servants cheerfully pick cotton, or hoe, looking hopefully for better times. The mere presence of a white man, as friend and protector, is a great power. Most warmly have I been welcomed by the blacks, and often have I been encouraged by their prayers for us, and themselves, and our cause. If these men and women are again enslaved, I hope I shall be bound with them. That they are fugitives from slavery is in their favor as men; and as far as I have, in my limited experience, been able to discover, they are now as well fitted to be freemen, if not better, than large numbers of whites at the north. I am sure they would be more grateful. I cannot tell what I have done on my plantations. I have not been idle, however. But I can tell what slavery has done, better than I ever wanted to know.

F. E. B.

St. Helena Island, S. C., March 24, 1862.

Mr. Pierce has entrusted to my charge no less than eight plantations. They are situated on the easterly shore of St. Helena Island, about midway between the northerly and southerly extremes, and cover a space about four miles in extent. I have been very busy in taking a census of the colored people on them, and other statistics of their past and present condi-

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tion, as I have to make a report on these matters to Mr. Pierce. The number of colored people is 541. The owner of one plantation, as I learn from one of the negroes here, was opposed to the secession movement, and predicted its failure. His timidity, probably, forced him to take part with the rebels, as did that of many others.

The plantations generally are in poor condition, having been stripped of their best horses, mules, saddles, carriages, &c., by the flying rebels, and subsequently rifled of valuable cattle and other stock by the soldiers of our army. The negroes, by a kind of instinct, inspired, as we must think, by a good Providence, chose to remain and take the chances of an invasion by the Yankees, who, if their masters were to be believed, intended to kidnap them and send them off to Cuba to be sold. I have talked with many of them on this point, and they all concur in saying that this was the fate which their masters predicted for them.

Yesterday, Sunday, I walked with Mr. Palmer and Demas to the Baptist Church (for colored people), some two miles from this place. We met at the Church several of the superintendents and teachers of other plantations, and we all of us spent an hour before the services commenced, in teaching the young and adult colored people the elements of reading. We are to teach them at the Church every Sunday morning, and those of them who reside on estates to which a teacher has been assigned, will have, besides, the benefit of a day school. Thus the day is beginning to dawn upon these benighted beings. Those wise philosophers, male and female, who think that negroes are baboons, would not believe me if I should set forth, in anything like adequate terms, the eagerness with which they apply themselves, young and old, to the task of learning the alphabet. You should have seen the joy manifested by the grown-up men when they made out a sentence of short monosyllables.

The negroes, young and old, are sadly destitute of proper clothing, shoes and hats. We brought with us some garments (many of them old ones) contributed by benevolent persons. But it is too cold yet to make use of them. I received a small box of them a day or two since, but probably there are not half enough to supply the demand. If somebody had the means and the disposition to send me *some shoes and straw hats of various sizes*, I could make a very good use of them—not *giving them away*, but distributing them *as the reward of labor*. It would be very unwise to do anything by which these negroes would get the idea that their wants are to be supplied gratis, and whether they work or not. We shall teach them that they will reap according to what they sow; that the faithful and industrious will fare better than the disobedient and idle. The Government, no doubt, will provide all that is requisite, as soon as some judicious scheme can be matured; but in the mean time these people are suffering, the crops must be planted, and inducements to labor must be held out to them.

The general good behavior and kindness of the negro population here surprises me. R. S., JR.

PARRIS ISLAND, PORT ROYAL, March 25th, 1862.

I came here on the 13th of the present month, and have been here nearly two weeks. This island is about half way between Beaufort and Port Royal, and seven miles from either place. I found here on my arrival a gentleman already in possession, who has been employed to gather the cotton, and to set the negroes to work in behalf of the government. This he had commenced with great success, and I found he had already gained the respect and regard of the negroes on the island, and they cheerfully did whatever he required. He was very glad to have me come, for he needed assistance very much. He is an excellent business man, but some other functions are needed here besides those of business. I act here now as the teacher, the preacher and the doctor, in which last capacity I find my course of study in medicine serves me very usefully. Besides, I dispense the stores that I have received from the general fund, in clothing, which this poor people need very much, and of which I have, as yet, a very inadequate supply. Their masters have given them no clothing for the past year; they carried away every thing they could, and the poor people were, at first, plundered even by our own soldiers. They shot all the animals eatable, and carried away whatever they fancied of the possessions of the poor negroes. I found them all in rags, and in utter destitution of every thing but corn.

I have established among them three schools, one for adults and two for children, on two different parts of the island. They are all anxious to learn to read, from the least to the greatest; and they are learning *fast*. In three months the greater part will be able to read the New Testament. I found one old man on the island that knew how to read, and I have made him my head teacher. I have addressed them the two last Sundays, and I found them a most attentive and devotional audience. They acknowledge very gratefully whatever is done for them. There are no better subjects of God's earth for benevolence than these poor people. They trust the government with all their hearts, and serve it now with all their powers, and it would break both, utterly, if they were delivered back to slavery. If this should ever take place, I would weep for my country as for a mother who had lost character. Let there be no flagging in your zeal for the help of these people.

The extent of Parris or Parry Island is five miles by three; amount under culture, about one third; number of plantations, five; number of negroes, three hundred and seventy-five.

J. C. Z.

BEAUFORT, S. C., MARCH 16th, 1862.

On Sunday morning, March 9th, the ground was covered with a white frost at Beaufort, which cut down the most forward of the orange blossoms, but has not endangered the crop. I have been in charge of arranging and distributing seeds and farming implements for four days, and have thus had opportunity to converse with many laborers from various plantations. I have been greatly interested by their manners, look and conversation. Some plantations have been carried on by the plantation hands alone; on one, with about forty laborers, some thirty acres have been prepared for planting, early vegetables planted, and already growing. Some have saved corn enough to plant, while almost starving and living on charity. I have had occasion to employ several, and have found but *one* lazy. I am struck with their erect and robust forms, their polite bearing and conversation to each other as well as to the whites. They are and will be quiet, industrious and good citizens, if guided and encouraged. Much need there is of better guidance and examples than they have had, especially since our army has been here. They seem, and I believe they are, very much pleased to have us come among them. The officers and soldiers, too, with whom I have conversed, give us a much more friendly reception than we expected. In fact, I suppose that they are very glad to be relieved of the care and trouble that necessity imposed upon them, and for which they had no inclination. I hear, on all sides, of the desire of the blacks, both old and young, to learn to read, and I hear that where schools have been established for some weeks, the improvement of the pupils is encouraging.

From all I can learn about the climate of this region, I think it is quite as healthy as our own. Imprudence and excess are visited with more summary and exemplary retribution; but there can be but little malarious miasma, if proper care be taken to prevent exposure—for there are *no* fresh water rivers, the region is literally composed of sea-islands, and the heat of the hottest part of summer is less than at Boston. Morning

and evening damps are deleterious, but they can be avoided, or counteracted by fire, flannel and food of proper kinds, in proper quantity and at proper times. D. M.

BEAUFORT, S. C., MARCH 30th, 1862.

I am, for the present, kept employed in distributing implements and seeds and rations, in a room where medicines are also dispensed. In this position I have had an opportunity to see and converse with many of the "drivers" of the plantations, and from my intercourse with them, I *hesitate not* to say, that (in my opinion) the question of the improvability of the negroes on their native soil *is solved*. These "foremen," as we denominate them, are greatly superior to their fellow laborers in air and bearing; in intelligent familiarity with the numbers, character and condition of those under their charge, in their explanation of the extent, crops and management of their plantations; in clear and business-like language and method; in purity, propriety and distinctness of utterance.

I wish to add my testimony to that of many who have had greater opportunities, concerning the amiability of the colored race. The adults are, almost universally, not only pleasant in manners and address, but they have countenances habitually expressing amiableness. I think you may infer that I have high expectations of the beneficent results of our enterprise.

D. M.

COFFIN POINT, ST. HELENA ISLAND, S. C., Mar. 25, 1862.

The twenty boxes of clothes we brought are a mere mouthful when applied to three or four thousand people, unfurnished since the autumn of 1860. I have written Mr. Pierce, urging that the first payment of wages be made in cloth (which they always make up themselves, by the way), thread, &c., *salt*, molasses, *tobacco*, a little sugar, ham or salt beef, such as their masters always gave them, and of all which they are sadly in want. In fact, if I had come here with a supply of these things sufficient to pay them for the work they have volunteered to do this month, I should have been hailed as a deliverer, and should have got double the amount of cotton planted that I shall now be able to. Now you need not expect much of a crop from us this year, for the following reasons:—All the ploughing mules and horses have been stripped from the plantations, either by the rebels or our own quartermasters, and *none* returned yet. What little work is now done has been done with old worn-out hoes, with bare feet, while they usually wore their last autumn shoes in listing, which articles exist not. Moreover, they generally begin to list ground a month earlier than this year, and continued too with an organized force of laborers, which, bad as it may have been in its basis, was more efficient than the unorganized chaos found on this and many other plantations.

I have given, thus far, the blue side of the subject, that you might be able to tell why we don't raise much cotton bye and bye. But there is a brighter side, when we think how it would have been if we had not come here. If the men had been left alone, or worked by ———, we can readily see how they would have grown worse and worse; and though we may not, in many cases, be able to inspire an honest love of industry and good order immediately, I must say I have found more of those traits on other plantations than I had hoped for.

Every thing here bodes well to our enterprise. The negroes on Mr. E.'s plantation have already prepared some hundred acres for planting, and a good deal has been done voluntarily on many other plantations. In fact, from what I have already seen here, I am agreeably disappointed. Think of their having re-organized and gone deliberately to work here, some weeks ago, without a white man near them, preparing hundreds of acres for the new crop!

There is need of men like Mr. M., and of physicians who can leave and devote themselves to dispensary practice with a will. If you feel any hesitation about coming in contact with the negroes, you should not come, for they are sharp enough to detect apathy or lurking repugnance, which would render any amount of theoretical sympathy about worthless. E. S. P.

COFFIN POINT PLANTATION, ST. HELENA,
March 17, 1862.

Very little cotton—*very* little—can be obtained from the islands this season; the lateness of the season, the absence of mules, &c., the departure of many of the smart young men to the camps, where they easily find employment, and the strange and confused circumstances of the people who remain at home, furnish a most ample excuse,—rather reason,—for this failure. In regard to the means of actual subsistence, corn enough remains on most of the plantations to carry the people through to the next crop.

Most of the children seem intelligent, and the parents are greatly delighted at the idea of education for them. One of the mothers told me this morning that she would work her girl's task, if she might be allowed to come to school; the girl is a mulatto, whom she views with great pride as well as fondness. The older people are usually very religious, inclined to "lean on top of the Lord," as one old woman expressed it —I think truly and purely so. The religion of the younger portion—in those who claim any—is more of the earth. Three evenings a week and thrice on the Sabbath they meet for prayer and praise. On one of our plantations the master has built them a small "praise-house"—a most unusual favor, I presume. The younger usually wish to end the worship with a "shout,"—a kind of slow, religious trot, accompanied by loud singing of a few lines or words repeated over and over again. The conclusion of the stanza or sentence is marked by a peculiar jerk of the body. It seems to be a negro variety of the Greek chorus,—and has about as little, perhaps as much, religion in it.

It is certainly no unjust or extravagant demand for a laboring people to ask for the food and clothing which masters, who considered them as property, found it expedient to grant. Private benevolence must supply the want, if it is to be supplied, both for the sake of speed, and to ensure anything like a sufficiency. A moment is passing in which it seems that more could be done for the negro race than at any past moment in its history; but it *is* passing, and unless employed for the purposes for which God offers it, years may again elapse before the epoch returns.

But one thing should be remembered; if any boxes of made clothing are ready, send them by all means, but the service will be increased, not lessened, by sending the goods in the piece, with the requisite sewing materials. The women seem to be—for their light—skilful tailoresses, they are accustomed to make the clothing for their families, and probably take a pleasure and pride in doing so. Certainly much better fits will be obtained, and less cloth wasted. If, apart from the absolute necessities of clothing, shoes and salt, any one feels disposed to help us greatly in our work, contributions of *tobacco*, soap, sugar, molasses, will pave a broad way into their confidence and love. They have been accustomed to buy small trifles for themselves, such as soap, tobacco, &c., but money they can now spend to less advantage than ever—supposing they had any. A few jack-knives for the boys, and bright ribbons for the girls, would make them show all the white they could in gratitude.

W. C. G.

LADIES' ISLAND, March 31st, 1862.

On the H. place, I found forty or more acres of ground ready for planting corn. They have now planted nearly all of it. On

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the S. place, which is small, they had done nothing, but now have nine acres of ground planted with corn, and have commenced to prepare the ground for cotton. On the B. place, I found nothing done; but the people have been at work, and have twenty-five acres or more of corn planted, and are to commence to prepare cotton-ground to-morrow. There is no corn on the place, and I am obliged to get the weekly allowance from a neighboring plantation. The people here are very much in need of salt and molasses; also of clothing. If the cloths could be furnished them, I think it would be better than garments already made.

This morning, by Mr. Pierce's directions, I commenced a school for the children in the neighborhood who were not of use in the field. I had forty scholars. This afternoon I formed a school, at 4, for the older people, and had thirty-five pupils. I find but two who know their letters, although many can say them in rotation. I. W. C.

ST. HELENA ISLAND, April 1, 1862.

This is the earliest possible date at which I could make you a proper Report of what I have done, and of the condition of the plantations and the negroes. I left Beaufort for this place March 19th, with a Mr. S., of New York. Seven plantations were assigned to us to take charge of. The potatoes and part of the corn are already planted. The negroes had gone to work and planted about four acres of corn for themselves, to keep from starving. They wanted to have that corn for themselves, and I told them they might if they would plant as much extra corn for Government; they said they would, and I shall see that it is done. I told the people that their wages for the *next* year depended entirely on the amount of work they did this year. With the disadvantages that they had to contend with, I told them that Government did not expect as much of them this year as last, but that if they did not do all they were able to do, they, not Government, would suffer; that the more cotton they raised, the more clothes, &c., they would have; that we should do all we could for them, if they did all they could for us.

The T. B. C. place is in the best condition of any I have seen. There is a very intelligent driver (Robert) on the place. He can read quite well, and knows fully what he is about; he keeps every thing in as good order as possible. The houses are kept clean, and in as good repair as it is possible to keep them. He had planted four or five acres of corn before we came, and it is up now.

The negroes are much pleased that we want to teach them, and they learn very fast; they take their books out into the field, or wherever they go, and some of them study more than they work. I told them if they did not do their tasks, I should take their books away; and they all said they would work harder if they could keep them. I teach every afternoon on the different plantations, and in the evening at Dr. J.'s. There is great need of simple spelling books. The negroes are very kind to us, and will do anything for us, if we will only teach them. I have not heard an oath among them since I came. They keep themselves much neater than I expected.

J. E. T.

BEAUFORT, S. C., April 2, 1862.

It is my duty to report, that a school for colored children is now in successful operation in Beaufort, under my supervision, in the immediate charge of Miss E. H. P., assisted by four colored teachers. Their names are Peter, Paul, Thomas and Ephraim. It was opened Jan. 8th, with 16 pupils; present number in attendance, 36 boys and 65 girls;—total, 101. The pupils are making good progress. None knew the letters of the alphabet on admission; the more advanced are now in easy reading. There is a marked improvement, also, in neatness, order and quietness. Within the last few weeks exercises in singing have been had daily, with manifest benefit. An hour in the afternoon is also devoted to the careful instruction of the assistant teachers, including penmanship. The colored teachers are paid by the avails of a weekly contribution of five cents from each pupil. This contribution is cheerfully made, but is not enforced in exceptional cases of orphanage or extreme poverty. The teachers have agreed to accept as their entire compensation whatever amount is realized—averaging now, in the aggregate, about $3 per week.

The Commission will be gratified to know, that although the opening of the school was at first looked upon with some distrust by the local military command, no obstructions have at any time been thrown in its way, and that it is now expressly regarded with favor. It gives me great pleasure to add, that other schools have also been opened in Beaufort and on some of the plantations, more or less organized, and that several Sabbath schools have been instituted, taught chiefly by plantation superintendents, with other helpers. The colored people are *eager* and *apt* to learn. Numerous private applications are made for books by adults, so as to study at home, which are generally granted; taking care to give to such none that are needed in the schools. S. PECK.

The above extracts from letters of the Teachers or agents of the Educational Commission are selected to show the character of the work in which they are engaged, and the encouraging success which they have so far met with. Although some of the letters have more especial reference to schools and teaching, it should be observed that the chief duty of the Teachers is to direct and organize the regular labor of the negroes on the plantations, and to look after their general welfare. Instruction is given chiefly on Sundays, and in the intervals of labor. Fifty Teachers have been sent to Port Royal by the Commission. They have been chosen with special reference to their fitness for this duty, for their good sense and practical ability. There are among them representatives of the various professions and occupations,—lawyers, physicians, clergymen, engineers, business men and mechanics. They have proved, almost without exception, well fitted for the positions assigned them.

The officers of the Commission are as follows, viz.:—

President.—His Excellency John A. Andrew, Governor of the Commonwealth.
Vice Presidents.—Rev. Jacob M. Manning, Rev. Edward E. Hale, Rev. T. B. Thayer, Rev. J. W. Parker, D.D., Rev. James Freeman Clarke, Hon. Jacob Sleeper, Dr. Robert W. Hooper, Rev. H. M. Dexter.
Treasurer.—Mr. William Endicott, Jr.
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Committee on Clothing.—Mrs. Samuel Cabot, Jr., Mr. George Atkinson, Mr. Edward Jackson, Mrs. J. A. Lane, Mrs. William B. Rogers.
Committee on Finance.—Mr. Edward Atkinson, Mr. Martin Brimmer, Mr. William Endicott, Jr., Mr. James T. Fisher, Mr. William I. Bowditch.
Committee on Correspondence.—Dr. Henry I. Bowditch, Prof. Francis J. Child, Dr. Samuel Cabot, Jr., Miss Ellen Jackson, Miss Anna Loring.

These constitute the General Committee, to any one of whom communications may be addressed, or subscriptions forwarded.

BOSTON, April 10th, 1862.